International Organization 1980–86: Anticipating the Future

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In honor of *IO*'s seventieth birthday the journal's current editor, Jon Pevehouse, asked his predecessors to provide a list of the "greatest hits" published during their tenure. My term as editor ran from 1980 to 1986. I have decided to recall five articles that are admirable for anticipating the future in the world of scholarship and politics. Since it is doubtful that the journal's readers could agree on the criteria by which to identify the "greatest hits," this deviation from my marching orders may not lead into a total wasteland. Instead it alerts us to the gift of intellectual intuition and anticipation that is one important marker of superior scholarship.

Looking back at six years of work more than three decades after it was published evokes mixed feelings—about oneself as a young scholar (operating on a clean slate), about old friends and colleagues (of which there are many), about the process of knowledge production and publishing (inescapably social and fraught with fallible editorial judgments), and about cherished projects (now largely forgotten).

The clean slate was first marked with the pithy editorial note that I published when there was a backlog of less than one issue, if my memory serves me correctly. My exemplary predecessor, Bob Keohane, did not want to saddle me with his editorial decisions. This was surely the right move but it left me biting my nails for a little while until the editorial office began to once again acquire a reasonable backlog of promising papers. Fretting with me in those early days was Roger Haydon who became the journal's consummate associate editor and a life-long friend. The editorial statement promised continuity. While I acknowledged that "academic journals like *IO* both reveal and reflect on the politics of their times," I am the first to admit that I was not cognizant of the Reagan Revolution that was getting underway at that very moment.[1]

By referring to *IO* rather than *International Organization* I signaled my intent to rebrand the journal. My proposal was roundly rejected by my tradition-bound colleagues at the first editorial board meeting. Taking a leaf from Admiral Nelson at the Battle of Copenhagen—who famously put his inverted looking glass on his blind eye and proclaimed "mate, I cannot read the signal"—I decided to move ahead with a new cover design and the new IO brand starting with the Winter 1983 issue (volume 37, number 1). Without comment, the board of editors warmly welcomed and unanimously endorsed my innovation at a subsequent meeting.

Looking through *IO*'s table of contents from those years is a reminder of the many colleagues and friends who travelled on roads similar to the route that the journal was trying to chart, propelled by the same basic instinct: love of learning. We all are part of an invisible community of scholars that stretches back to the beginning of time and that I hope will never end. Editors are in the privileged and rarely acknowledged position of receiving innumerable intellectual gifts from colleagues and friends who are often more learned and smarter than they are.

Learning and publishing are social processes fraught with unavoidable editorial mistakes. The fact that I did not accept an article by Art Stein on issue linkage, eagerly

[1] Katzenstein 1981, n.p.

published soon thereafter by *World Politics*, has always troubled me. Whenever I've had the opportunity, with Art in the room, I have talked about it—as a useful reminder of an editor's fallibility in judgement. Art has been unfailingly gracious about the wound I inflicted then and that hopefully has healed with the passing of time. Happily, he has published in *IO* in subsequent years.

Some of the important projects now forgotten that were published in the first half of the 1980s include the special issue on regimes (volume 36, number 2, 1982), one of the best-selling special issues of all time and for a long time *not* forgotten; the symposium on political consequences of industrial change (volume 38, number 1, 1984) that followed up on the article by Jim Kurth about the political consequence of the product cycle (that Bob Keohane selected as one of his three memorable articles published in the second half of the 1970s);[2] the symposium on the new realism (volume 38, number 2, 1984) that added new voices to a hotly debated issue in the 1980s; the symposium on the political economy of debt (volume 39, number 3, 1985) that addressed the sovereign debt crisis of Latin America's political economies; and the special issue in 1986 on socialist states (volume 40, number 2) that offered a companion to the field of comparative capitalism that had been the subject of a special issue I edited a decade earlier. The fact that these special issues and symposia are now largely forgotten in no way diminishes their intellectual importance in the history of the journal and the excitement and pleasure I derived from working with their editors and authors to bring them to life.

There are a number of articles that are surely worthy of appearing on a list of "greatest hits." They include, in chronological order, Steve Krasner's article on structural causes and regime consequences that was the introduction to the special issue on regimes; Bob Keohane's article on the demand for international regimes that was part of the same issue; Ernie Haas's article on regime decay; Miriam Steiner's article on world views and prescriptive decision paradigms; Peter Gourevitch's article on breaking with orthodoxy; Bruce Russett's article on the mysterious case of vanishing hegemony; Duncan Snidal's article on the limits of hegemonic stability theory; and Ellen Comisso's article on state structures and collective choice in Eastern European states.[3] These articles illustrate how, in the first half of the 1980s, *IO* was a site of shared political and theoretical concerns, vibrant debates, and truly outstanding scholarship.

I choose here, however, to discuss five articles that admirably anticipated the future in scholarship or world politics. John Ruggie's article on embedded liberalism was placed in the midst of the fat special issue on regimes.[4] It applied the insights of economic sociology (a field that had not yet been reinvented in the early 1980s) to the coevolution of international trade liberalization and the welfare state in the era of American primacy. A generation later a broadening and deepening of globalization and a retrenchment and partial dismantling of the welfare state heralds the beginning of a new and more ominous era in world politics. More than thirty years after its publication, Ruggie's often-cited article tells us why.

Ron Rogowski's trenchant review of three great books—Gilpin's *War and Change*, North's *Structure and Change,* and Olson's *Rise and Decline of Nations*—left

[2] Kurth 1979.
[3] Comisso 1986; Haas 1983; Gourevitch 1984; Keohane 1982; Krasner 1982; Russett 1985; Snidal 1985; Steiner 1983.
[4] Ruggie 1982.

me with some of the most memorable sentences published in *IO*. Speaking of Mancur Olson, for example, whose book he deeply admired, Rogowski wrote "I shall concede at once that there is also in it much that alienates: the tone is pompous (what other living author, one wonders, would have had the brass to appropriate for one of his own previous works the short title *The Logic*, or to concede amiably that his own momentous contribution has been possible only because 'he stands on the shoulders of giants'?)."[5] More to the point, in his generous and brilliant critique, Rogowski's prescience pointed the reader to three books that helped set the intellectual agenda for the next generation.

Rick Ashley's searing indictment of the poverty of neorealism had circulated as a *samizdat* text when I read it.[6] Even though I did not understand most of it, I was sure that it was important and that I should publish this early specimen of critical IR studies. Ashley's intellectual reach was astonishing. He was an expert in econometric and statistical analyses of international relations, illustrated in his authoritative review of various contributions to world modeling (among other things).[7] In his critique of neo-realism—at the time the center of attention and admiration for many international relations scholars—Ashley went with a vengeance after virtually all of the preconceptions that the field shared about world politics and how to study it. Knowing that it would not have a chance in a normal review process, I took a bit of editorial license and asked Bob Gilpin to write a rejoinder. Together with the help of a couple hand-picked board members, I did due diligence overseeing the review process. Ashley's piece caused a big stir and earned me more than the occasional frown from the editorial board. It was a small price worth paying because the piece was the opening salvo of a debate that has gone global and has continued ever since (although no longer), for the most part in the pages of *IO*.

Valerie Bunce showed the acumen that the 1980s international relations literature on hegemony and the Cold War plainly lacked.[8] A specialist in Soviet and Eastern European affairs and comparative politics, Bunce understood better than most IR specialists the growing costs and dysfunctions of the Eastern bloc. In analyzing the declining value of the Soviet empire, she did not predict the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but she provided the most clear-sighted and insightful discussion of how and why this empire had begun to strike back at the Soviet Union and thus prepared the ground for its collapse a few years later.

My final selection is the last article I published in my editorial term. John Ruggie and Fritz Kratochwil's assessment of the field of international organization was a good send-off.[9] I had a strong intuition of its importance, and thus placed it as the lead article. Its discussion of ontology and epistemology, norms in explanation and fixed hierarchy, and fluid change in the components of analysis added up to a powerful critique and pointed a way to the future. Regime theory had opened the Pandora box of intersubjective understandings without really coming to terms with that concept in its empirical research program. The article was thus a prescient contribution of the constructivist turn that the end of the Cold War helped propel to the forefront of international relations research and the journal's table of contents.

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[5] Rogowski 1983, 714.
[6] Ashley 1984.
[7] Ashley 1983.
[8] Bunce 1985.
[9] Ruggie and Kratochwil 1986.

Editors do not steer journals. They navigate the shifting currents of scholarship. Their contribution is modest at best. And that contribution is typically tempered by a sense of self-doubt. Precisely because it is the leading journal of international relations, I very much hope that *IO* will continue to be informed by some doubt. In an era of unfathomable changes this would support a tradition of making the journal receptive for scholarship that uses cutting-edge theory to sift current evidence in anticipation of what lies ahead.

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